

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

Election/Restrictions

The Office Action made the restriction requirement final. Consequently, claims 7-13, 15, 16 and 23 are cancelled from this application. Applicant reserves the right to file a divisional application to pursue the subject matter of the cancelled claims.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The Office Action rejected claims 1, 2 and 21 under 35 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by O'Neal. To facilitate prosecution of the present application, claims 1 and 21 have been cancelled without prejudice. Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection of claim 2, which has been amended to incorporate the limitations of claim 1.

Claim 2 calls for a lockdown flange having an annular body with an axial passageway having an internal diameter greater than that of the passageway through the wellhead so that a mandrel of a blowout preventer protector can be inserted therein and sealed against the annulus of a lockdown flange. In contrast, the O'Neal adapter 8 has an annulus identical to the annulus of the casing head 2 to which it is mounted. For at least this reason, O'Neal fails to teach or suggest the limitations of claim 2.

The subject matter of claim 1 is likewise incorporated into claim 3, which is now rewritten as an independent claim, deemed allowable.

Claim 22, deemed allowable, has been amended to incorporate the limitations of cancelled claim 21, from which claim 22 previously depended.

The rejection of claims 1, 2 and 21 in view of O'Neal is thereby traversed.

The Office Action further rejected claim 1, 2 and 21 under 35 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by Dallas '024. Again with respect to claim 2, the mandrel head 16 of Dallas '024 does not have an internal diameter that is greater than that of a passageway through the wellhead so that the mandrel of a blowout preventer protector can be inserted therein and sealed against the annulus of the lockdown flange. It is clear that the mandrel head 16 is connected to the mandrel and could not accommodate a seal assembly connected to the bottom of the mandrel, which is larger than the mandrel itself and much larger than a passage through the mandrel head. The rejection of claim 2 in view of Dallas is thereby traversed.

As noted above, claims 1 and 21 have been cancelled without prejudice, and the rejection of these claims is traversed.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicant gratefully acknowledges that claims 14, 17-20 and 24 are allowed.

Applicant further gratefully acknowledges that claims 3-6 and 22 are objected to but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Claims 3-6 and 22 have been rewritten in independent form. Claim 2 has likewise been rewritten in independent form and for reasons set forth above in detail is considered to be in a condition for allowance.

Specification

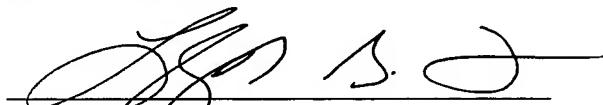
The Office Action objected to the disclosure because the co-pending applications recited in paragraphs [0012] and [0062] required update. Those amendments have been made, and the objection is traversed. Paragraph [0062] has been amended to correct the filing date noted for application serial number 10/162,803, to June 3, 2002.

Conclusion

In view of the cancellation of claims 1, 7-13, 15, 16 and 21, the amendment of claims 2, 3 and 22, as well as the amendments to the specification set forth above, this application is now considered to be in a condition for immediate allowance. Favourable reconsideration and early issuance of a Notice of Allowance is requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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